ARMY COMMUNICATOR

Joint Communications Support Element

Plus:

- ***Signal History***

Contents

The Army Communicator is published as a command information e-publication for the men and women of the United States Army Signal Corps under the provisions of AR 360-1.

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COL James D. Turinetti IV

Signal School Commandant

CSM Darien D. Lawshea
Signal Corps Regimental Command Sergeant Major

CW5 Chris R. Westbrook

Signal Corps Regimental Chief Warrant Officer

On the Cover

JCSE analyzed tactical communications equipment sets inside a spectrum secure Anechoic Chamber located at the Electromagnetic Vulnerability Assessment Facility (EMVAF) at White Sands Missile Range, NM in partnership with the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Data & Analysis Center (DAC). Utilizing the controlled space, the team was able to replicate contested Electromagnetic environments and employ spectrum interference measures mapped to adversary capabilities which allowed analysts to quantitatively define mission impact and implement mitigation measures against electronic attacks.

Team Signal,

The Signal community has always excelled at remaining agile and adaptive to change as the Army relies on Signaleers and their employment of technology. The Army as a whole is undergoing the same, with wholescale shaping efforts to maintain a competitive advantage over our near peer threats.

Along with the Command Sergeant Major and Chief Warrant Officer, we just returned from a network modernization effort aimed at piloting on the move capabilities that have the potential to be fielded as part of Capability Set 25 to Armored Brigade Combat Teams. We also returned from the Joint Readiness Training Center after witnessing a rotational training unit fight to win in a contested environment. Both visits brought to bear how communicators are leveraging capabilities to support the fight as we focus on the Division as the Unit of Action in support of Multi-Domain Operations. As the Army evolves, it is just as important to understand how we employ communications assets to better support an evolving Army.

This edition focuses on an organization that, from a joint perspective, has and continues to support joint force communication requirements, in cooperation with allied partners. While equipment modernization efforts are ever pressing onward, what remains consist is the commitment we provide as Soldiers.

As always, thank you for all you do for the Regiment.

Pro Patria Vigilans!

COL James Turinetti IV
Signal School Commandant

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Regimental CSM

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Regimental CWO

60 Years of the Joint Communications Support Element

The Voice Heard Around the World

Mr. Thomas Wilson, 1LT Jared Polack, 1st LT Jonathan Toves
Joint Communications Support Element

"The joint commander conducting operations in the field has a requirement for a tactical mobile communications unit, which serves him exclusively. Communications systems, particularly those committed to contingency operations, must be operated by personnel who have trained together and who have readily available the minimum essential communications equipment." -United Strike Command PAM 105-1, April 1966

In the fall of 1961, President John F. Kennedy directed the organization of a command to provide a rapid response capability for emergent crises in a Cold War environment. That command, headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, was designated U.S. Strike Command (USSTRICOM) and was composed of operational elements from both the Strategic Army Corps and the Tactical Air Command. USSTRICOM's theater of operations was the entire globe, so it created the Communications Support Element (CSE) as its first operational subordinate unit to support communications for up to two simultaneous global contingencies. Sixty years later, the Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) continues to carry on this legacy of global response.

At inception, the mission of the CSE was to prepare for rapid deployment in support of the joint force commander. By 1964 CSE had been used in combat operations in the Congo as part of Joint Task Force Leo in the successful execution of Operation Dragon Rouge alongside French and Belgian Allied commands. Throughout its first ten years, the CSE would continue to be leveraged and was called upon for unique missions, including humanitarian support to the African continent, civil hurricane response in the U.S. and the Caribbean, and even as an emergency force for astronaut recovery during the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo mission programs. These operations underlined the requirement for a dedicated joint communications capability which could be called upon for both military and civil support operations, as well as to rapidly establish connectivity with coalition forces.

In the early 1970's, the Department of Defense underwent a major restructure impacting the CSE. It was highlighted during the restructure of the need for both Navy and Marine billets into the organization, resulting in re-designation of the CSE into the "Joint" CSE (JCSE). Another implication was re-designating USTRICOM to U.S.

JCSE historically provides DOD's solution to expeditionary communications for joint force commanders through the use of the Deployable Joint Command and Control System (DJC2). (courtesy photo)

Readiness Command (USREDCOM). USREDCOM retained operational control of JCSE and directed deployments until the early 1980's including response to the Jonestown Massacre in Guyana, as well as Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) in Nicaragua. Additionally, JCSE's involvement in Operations Eagle Claw and Urgent Fury in the early 1980s would have significant impact on the joint force.

Both Eagle Claw (1980) and Urgent Fury (1983) highlighted the interoperability issues inherent in rapidly assembling disparate service forces to plan and execute a mission outside of normal Concepts of Op-

erations (CONOPS). One success story during Operation Eagle Claw was joint communications, largely due to JCSE and Special Operations Forces (SOF) communicators. This was taken as so significant that following Eagle Claw, the Joint Communications Unit was formed at Ft. Bragg with cadre made up largely from JCSE volunteers.
Both these operations highlighted a need for joint operations reform. What rapidly followed had a significant impact upon JCSE. Operational authority for the Element was given directly to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs as a "Chairman's Controlled Joint Activity." USREDCOM was eventually re-designated U.S. Special Operations Command in 1987 and immediately laid claim to JCSE as part of the effort to develop and enhance Special Operations Force (SOF) doctrine. The Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) was of particular concern. While JCSE was adequately resourced for two tactical joint solutions, there simply was not enough manpower to assume two JSOTF missions. The answer to this challenge was and the 290th JCSS from Florida. This effort was so successful that it would be repeated with the Army Reserve in 2006 as JCSE added the 4th Joint Communications Squadron (USAR), a component of the 335th Theater Signal Command. The addition of 4JCS eased manpower constraints that challenged operations in Afghanistan.

The payoff for many of these changes was realized in the successful execution of Desert Shield/Storm in 1990 and 1991. JCSE was key to the rapid deployment and buildup of forces, mobilizing and deploying the entire Active and Reserve Component elements of the command. The Element was also a part of a continual set of operational deployments as part of Northern and Southern Watch, along with subsequent deployments to Bosnia and Kosovo. As the latter operations were winding down in 1998 JCSE's operational control was once again changed, this time to U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM).

In Fall 2001, USJFCOM mobilized and deployed JCSE as the lead in establishing tactical communications support in response to the 9/11/01 terror attacks. Once again, the entire Active and Reserve Components of the Element were mobilized to build out the theater infrastructure for joint and special operations in Southwest Asia. Deploying initially in early October, with teams in Afghanistan the Element remained deployed in support of operations until this past August. JCSE can lay claim to being one of the only organizations to be deployed to Afghanistan for the entire duration of operations in that country, and JCSE members currently remain on the job in other parts of the theater even now.

JCSE has continued to respond to the needs of our nation, including a large response to New Orleans as part of Joint Task Force Katrina in 2005. Organizational restructure also continued, and in August 2011 JCSE ended its organizational relationship with USJFCOM as the combatant command disestablished. As part of this effort, various joint activities were re-aligned. This included the JCSE which was emplaced as part of the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC) within the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) hierarchy. Even as this transition was being executed the Element was called upon to provide U.S. civil support and assistance to Japan as part of Operation Tomodachi.

JCSE provides and operate communications systems in support of joint commander's and their ability to maintain command & control. (courtesy photo)

JCSE has continued to maintain an aggressive operational tempo. The Element was one of the first responders into Liberia as part of Operation United Assistance to assist with the outbreak of the Ebola virus. JCSE returned to the African continent twice that year, supporting operations against Boko Harem in Cameroon and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. The Element also demonstrated its operational flexibility by supporting both Department of Defense and Department of State negotiating efforts to mitigate violence in Syria. Humanitarian assistance continued to be a JCSE center of gravity during efforts in Nepal after a devastating earthquake and as part of response options in Haiti following Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Most recently the Element executed both Civil Support and Humanitarian support after Hurricane Harvey, Irma, and Maria hit the Caribbean Basin, Puerto Rico, and Texas in rapid succession in the fall of 2017 while simultaneously responding to changes in Operation Inherent Resolve.

Exercise Talisman Sabre

A biennial, multinational military exercise

SSG Ryan Getty, 1LT Jared Polack
Joint Support Communications Element

Every two years JCSE travels to Australia to participate in Talisman Sabre, the largest combined training exercise between the United States and the Australian Defense Forces. The exercise is designed to test Combined and Joint Task Force capabilities and improve interoperability between the two forces. This affords JCSE communicators an opportunity to test their skills in an environment they may not experience on a regular basis. Beyond the given task of providing communications, JCSE communicators were able to integrate with the Australian service members and spend time cross training with their equipment. Over the course of two days in the field with the Australian Defense Force, JCSE service members were able to train on foreign weapons, earn Australian jump wings, fly an Australian drone, and try their MREs as well as other unique experiences presented by the joint nature of the event.

While enjoying their time with the Australians, the JCSE communicators ensured mission success through the establishment of classified and unclassified voice and data services for the Commander of the 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry (Airborne). The equipment used to provide these services had to be not only rugged enough to survive the local elements, but compact and light enough to be jumped out of a plane. To meet these requirements, the team utilized the Forced Entry Node, a small form factor initial entry package that is purpose built for airborne operations. Due to the size of typical military satellite transport solutions such as a Hawkeye or Tampa and the lack of ISP in the field, transport was provided through Cradlepoint (cellular) and BGAN (satellite). The team also had iridium phones on standby for quick use and emergency voice capabilities.

The location on the globe relative to satellite constellations and cellular networks presented challenges that our communicators had the opportunity to work through and resolve. Many lessons were learned, and SOPs codified while over the course of a few days which have been put into practice and shared across the Element to streamline operations for future missions and training. Critical to any communications mission, and

JCSE and Australian service members take a break from training to form important relationships as the communicators ensured mission success during Talisman Sabre 2021. (courtesy photo)

underscored by this exercise, is the development of a robust PACE plan that is reviewed or modified based on the location and requirements of each situation. The opportunity for JCSE communicators to travel to future exercises in unusual and remote areas will ensure that our service members have the unique experience and expertise required to answer the call and provide reliable expedient communications solutions anywhere in the world at a moment's notice.

###

Modernizing the Force
JCSE increases agility and scalability

1LT Jared Polack, 1st LT Jonathan Toves
Joint Communications Support Element

Since its establishment in 1961 the Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) has served as the Department of Defense's (DoD) standing Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) expeditionary communications provider. To maintain this skillset, JCSE routinely deploys service members worldwide to provide communications support for exercises, operations, and events of national interest. The level of support that JCSE is expected to provide for Combatant Commanders and the Joint Staff has driven the Element towards constant modernization and adaption. Previous steps such as the dissolution of Time Division Multiplexing (TDM) and implementation of Internet Protocol (IP) based networking at the tactical level have transformed not only JCSE's capabilities, but the capabilities and effectiveness of the entirety of the United States Military's communications. Likewise, innovations occurring today will have a similar exponential impact on the efficiency and abilities of the tactical communicator as those of the past.

Amongst JCSE and the greater military communications community, the ongoing effort to lighten the load and increase the agility and scalability of communications at the tactical edge continues. In alignment with the 2018 Nation Defense Strategy's emphasis on long-term, strategic competition, JCSE began refocusing its support to enable Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) deterrence, competition, and conflict with Great Power Competitors. Commercial off the shelf solutions for virtualization and software defined networking (SDN) have the potential to fulfill all the above in addition to sharpening the edge of our communicators' technical knowledge and enabling off the cuff solutions to our unique problem set. With the emergence of virtualization and SDN, the same hardware will support not only routers and servers but multiple instances of each which greatly reduces the amount of equipment necessary to provide the same service we do today.

Additionally, as our communicators and networks currently operate, routing decisions executed based on the information in the network layer (layer three) of the traffic cause the majority, if not all, our data to take the same path regardless of application or importance. This classical version of networking will quite rapidly be outdated and replaced with a more agile solution capable of routing based on characteristics at layer seven (application layer). Under this new configuration, network traffic will be able to travel over different paths or forms of transport based on the application, and therefor importance of that traffic to the end user resulting in a greatly improved quality of service for the most critical information.

Furthermore, the ability to rapidly build and expand the network through service chain virtualization enables rapid architecture design and modification. Communicators will have prebuilt hardware and software configurations, similar to what is in production now, but will gain greater ability to make on the fly changes to modify their kit for situational conditions.

CW2 Holmes sets up an MPU-5 Mesh Radios as part of Pacific Endeavor 21. (courtesy photo)

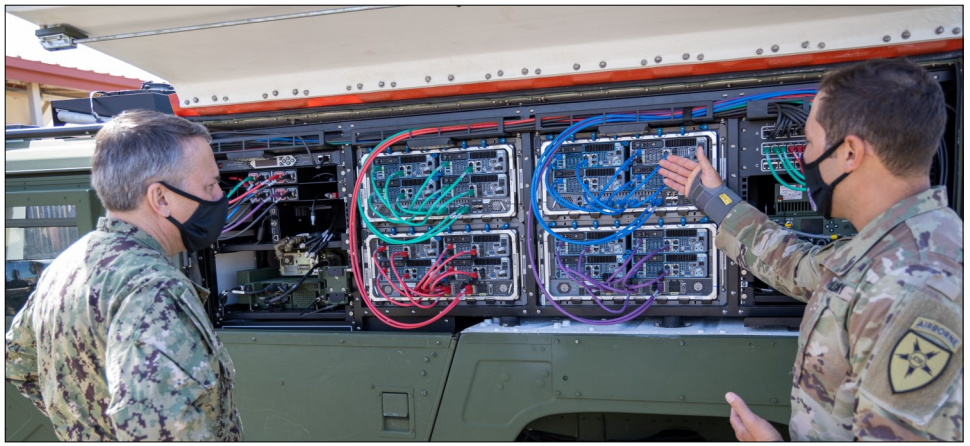
By incorporating this methodology, JCSE will be able to provide scalable solutions to customers through early entry, initial arrival, and Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) packages based on the same hardware and without the need to replace the entire system as requirements change over the lifecycle of a mission.

JCSE's characteristic capability to provide scalable communications solutions up to a JFHQ starts with the implementation of the Unified Communications Platform - Light (UCP-L) and Tactical Data Center (TDC). The UCP-L is JCSE's first take at a software defined tactical communications platform that will be utilized to provide an initial entry package to a broad range of customers. It will additionally serve as the foundation of larger communications packages fielded in the near future, establishing the agility and scalability required to adapt to the rapidly developing mission requirements of contingency operations.

Communicators from the 2nd Joint Communications Squadron (2JCS) recently participated in a Joint Staff exercise, showcasing the newly adopted platform as a service by means of the TDC. The TDC was the first device to host the Secret and Below Releasable (SABRE) network at the tactical edge, where partner nations and the U.S. would be able to communicate in a zero-trust environment based on the credentials of the client. This allows for all the other flavors of classified networks utilized between partner nations and the U.S. to be hosted in a centralized network, enabling a more seamless crossflow of communications. This exercise was a pathfinder event used as a proof of concept by the Joint Staff and the DoD for future implementation.

The learning curve presented by the new software and equipment is already being tackled by the communicators at the squadrons, however, service members joining JCSE in the future will have the opportunity to get the hands-on training required to operate and employ the TDC, UCP -L, and network function virtualization at JCSE's specialized in-house school, the Joint Communications Academy (JCA). The JCA is the first place our communicators go to learn how to be a multi-disciplined communicator regardless of MOS, Rate, or AFSC background. Upon graduation of JCA, JCSE communicators have the relevant skillset and are eligible to deploy with teams to provide communications support when the call arises.

Unique among the military, JCSE will continue to develop, and field cutting edge communications technologies and provide highly sought-after training opportunities. In addition to supporting operational plans and readiness exercises across combatant commands, JCSE is increasing its support to help with service initiatives such as the Army's Multi Domain Task Forces and the Air Force's modernization of small form factor communications equipment. It's highly skilled and professional communicators continue to perform magnificently and truly make the



The JCSE team established a MANET link between the base station and the Coordination Center. (courtesy photo)

JCSE employed and maintained a mobile ad-hoc network (MANET) using small form-factor radios with mesh network capabilities. (courtesy photo)

Element a special place to serve. Since its inception JCSE continues to be whatever the Joint Force needs it to be, transforming itself and remaining at the cutting edge for delivering C4ISR capabilities to its customers across the joint force.

###

Allies Train, Learn, and Strengthen Partnerships

Exercise Cobb Ring

SGT Derek Supel
Joint Communications Support Element

With an ever-evolving threat to our nation's security and our allies, it is vital that JCSE takes time to conduct joint multinational exercises to prepare the force for such threats. Servicemen and women from the 1st Joint Communications Squadron (1JCS) and 2nd Joint Communications Squadron (2JCS), Joint Support Communications Element (JCSE), MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, and the British Army's 30th Signal Regiment did precisely that during the annual Cobb Ring exercise.

Cobb Ring executed Oct. 28 to Nov. 17, 2021, with members of both JCSE and the 30th Signal Regiment operating together at two locations: Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom (UK) The goal was to conduct exceptional training together to make both services better fit to interoperate on the battlefield—wherever that battlefield may be.

Cobb Ring involved a spectrum of training ranging from the implementation of high frequency radio training and remote communications packages to field training and tactical movements on the battlefield. In both the UK and Puerto Rico, Cobb Ring created a training and learning environment that strengthened the expertise and increased the capabilities of JCSE and our allied partners.

"While working alongside our British allies in Puerto Rico we were able to facilitate training that helped both The British and ourselves understand the differences and similarities between our operating styles and within our training," said U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Gerardo Garcia; who is a team chief and skilled operator of many JCSE systems. "We felt that, as a global fighting force who works with many partner nations, an emphasis not only on signal equipment, but also on fundamental skills such as, land navigation, weapons training, and tactical movements will build on and strengthen the relationship between our services."

Across the pond, a another set of British soldiers and members of JCSE were also hard at work taking part in building those international relations. "While working with the 30th Signal Regiment in the UK, I was able to see and understand how they train and what differences and similarities there are between our two forces." said U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant Moises Hernandez, a highly proficient team chief and operator of JCSE systems. "We worked alongside of a lot of their junior enlisted and the professional work ethic and the knowledge they possessed was created a training environment that JCSE and other units would benefit from immensely."

1JCS, 2JCS, and British Service Members from the 30th Signal Regiment trained together for the duration of the exercise. (courtesy photo)

Upon completion of this exercise both British and American forces understood the importance of this exercise in the way of coming together to share knowledge and experience will always benefit you, whether it be the unit as a whole or an individual service member. This training is one that should stand out as a keystone to victory in our efforts to allied interoperability and success.

###

JCSE Offers Opportunities to All Services

The Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) is a joint command operating at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. We provide enroute, initial entry, early entry or Joint Force Headquarters communications assets to support Regional Combatant Commands, Special Operations Command, Joint Task Force (JTF) Headquarters, Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), and other agencies as directed by the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM). The Element maintains a professional joint force of highly skilled, rapidly deployable communications experts who possess only the latest forms of network and telecommunications expertise.

JCSE is also home to the Communications Support Detachment (CSD), a conglomerate of technicians who supplement Communications Squadrons. CSD's mission is to maintain fully trained and ready teams for worldwide deployment with all levels of unmatched maintenance support. JCSE sustains DODs most diverse automotive fleets consisting of commercial and tactical vehicles, material handling equipment, and maritime vessels. CSD further supports JCSE by supplementing Immediate Response Force teams, Integrated Communications Vehicle support and maintenance, maritime services, over the road line-haul movements, and Airborne Capabilities.

Located at MacDill Air Force Base, the Tampa/St. Petersburg area offers a convenient jumping off point for all travel, it's a region with miles of waterfront, sandy beaches, cultural attractions and exciting amusements parks.

If you are interested in joining our team, please contact us at transcom.macdill.jecc-jcse.mbx.j1@mail.mil or call 813-828-0628. The job is tough, demanding, and relevant - but the rewards of serving with only the nation's best, and the personal and professional experiences you'll gain are guaranteed to be most fulfilling. Our great team, with its many and diverse missions, makes a difference each and every day for our Nation.

Reservists:

JCSE wants to hear from you. The command is actively recruiting USAR, USNR, USAFR and Marine Corps Reserves for voluntary mobilization tours to Tampa, Florida. Upon mobilization you will be assigned to one of our active-duty communication squadrons supporting worldwide operations. Interested reservists may contact us at transcom.macdill.jecc-jcse.list.hss-j9@mail.mil.

JCSE is open to the following personnel:
Army MOS: 25A, 25B, 25U, 25S, 25N, 88L, 91B, 91C, 91D, 91E, 92F, 94E
Air Force AFSC: 17DXB, 1D7X1, 2T3X1, 3E0X1, 3E1X1
Navy Rate: ET, IT, CE
Marine Corps MOS: 0602, 0671, 2862, 2831, 5769, 0629

JCSE Requirements for all personnel include:
Minimum grades of E4/O2
Must be eligible for and able to maintain a Top Secret clearance

Service Specific Information:
Army: Reach out to your branch manager to discuss your opportunities and qualifications. Officer openings will be listed on AIM.

Air Force: Job openings will be advertised via AMS and the Talent Marketplace. Air Force specific contacts: SMSgt Shaffner, William: 813-828-6038, william.z.shaffner.mil@mail.mil and SMSgt Figueroa Rivas, Oscar: 813-828-0677, oscar.o.figueroarivas.mil@mail.mil (2T3X1/3E0X1/3E1X1).

Navy: Job openings will be listed on My Navy Assignment. Navy Specific Contact: ITCS Cofield, Jarrad: 813-828-0554, jarrad.k.cofield2.mil@mail.mil

Marine Corps: Job openings will be advertised on HQMC. Marine Corps specific contacts: Capt Hanson, Steven: 813-828-0573, steven.n.hanson.mil@mail.mil and GySgt Robinson, Adam: 813-828-5041, adam.a.robinson.mil@mail.mil.

Any interested personnel are encouraged to visit JCSE's social media pages on LinkedIn, Facebook, or Instagram.

Closing Note from the Commander and Command Sergeant Major

"We would like to express sincere gratitude for all JCSE alumni who built the lineage and reputation that current service members have the privilege of inheriting and responsibility to further build upon. We would also like to thank our service members, the men and women who deploy into the arena and perform magnificently, and who continue to choose to self-lessly serve during some of the most dynamic and challenging times in recent history".

- COL James Lowery & CSM Timothy McGuire

First In - The 39th Signal Battalion deploys to South Vietnam, 1962

Steven J. Rauch
Signal Corps Branch Historian

In 1962, the US role in the conflict in Vietnam was primarily an advisory capacity to the South Vietnamese government and military. However, even at that early stage, the mission was growing and as it did, it became clear that improvements and expansion of communications were becoming more and more vital to the mission. On February 8, 1962, the US established the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). Immediately a US Army Support Group was formed for administrative and logistical support. The rudimentary capacity of the existing South Vietnam network facilities was inadequate to fill the needs of American commanders. It was quickly determined that Signal Corps units were needed to provide reliable and robust communications capabilities for MACV and very shortly thereafter a Signal battalion was notified for deployment to the theater.

The 39th Signal Battalion was selected for the mission. The 39th had seen brief service in Europe during early 1945 but was inactivated by the end of the year. Eventually it was reactivated at Camp Gordon, Georgia on August 6, 1951 and allotted to the regular army. It was reorganized and redesignated on June 15, 1954 as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 39th Signal Battalion at Fort Gordon, Georgia. During most of the 1950s, the 39th participated in deployments and rotations for training to Europe and within the continental US.

Lieut. Col. Lotus B. Blackwell commanded the 39th Signal Battalion in 1962. The battalion had an authorized strength of over 1,000 men organized into an HHD and three companies: 232nd Signal Company (Support) at Ft. Huachuca; 362nd Signal Company (Tropo) at Ft. Gordon, and the 178th Signal Company (Support) at Ft. Sam Houston. The mission of the battalion was to operate and maintain a strategic tropospheric scatter system known as BACK PORCH as well as shorter-range extensions, or tails, using mobile teams. In addition, the unit was to operate all telephone switchboard exchanges and communications message centers for army units in the country.

Only the 178th Signal Company was ready for deployment. The 362nd was in dire need of soldiers, vehicle, tools and equipment. Blackwell's staff tried to obtain men from other signal units on Camp Gordon

Aerial view of Phu Lam communications complex showing the tropospheric scatter billboard antennas used for the BACKPORCH system. Photo: Signal History Office collection

but they were reluctant to do so. At Ft. Huachuca, commanders did not want to give up the 232nd Signal Company so they transferred the best men and equipment to other units, leaving the 39th Signal Battalion the lesser desired leftovers. This reflected a period of intense competition for signal assets, particularly competent and trained soldiers, most of whom were leaving military service for the more lucrative pay of the developing civilian electronics industry. Attempts were made to provide recruiting incentives and higher pay for these technicians but it was still a period of fiscal austerity for the Army.

In spite of the manpower challenges, Blackwell and his staff focused on getting the unit to Vietnam. In February, a 26-man advance party was sent to MACV headquarters to operate the switchboards. By March 23, 1962, the entire HHD and 232nd Signal Company had arrived in Saigon and soon began installing communications into the MACV and Army Support Group facilities.

By mid-summer, the entire battalion had arrived in the Republic of Vietnam. It was then that the battalion began to work with civilian contractors from Page Communications to install, operate and maintain the sophisticated troposcatter communications system down the entire length

of South Vietnam under the code name BACK PORCH. In addition, the 39th was responsible for telephone directory and information service; photographic service, including film and equipment exchange; motor and air courier message service; cryptographic distribution service and maintenance support for all US Army and South Vietnamese units in Vietnam; signal maintenance support; and operation of the US Army Signal supply point.

Initially the 39th HHD established its headquarters at Tan Son Nhut airfield near Saigon. The 232nd Signal Company was deployed in the Saigon and Mekong Delta areas where they operated manual telephone exchanges, message communications centers, high-frequency radio teletype and voice terminals, and tails of the backbone system. The 178th Signal Company stationed at Da Nang provide communications support in the northern part of South Vietnam. The 362nd Signal Company established its headquarters at Nha Trang where they operated the long lines tropospheric scatter system. Their network eventually included six terminals in Thailand to furnish long-lines support to the joint US Military Advisory Group, Thailand.

The overall control and direction of communications in Vietnam was vested in the US joint communication-electronics staff in Saigon. Direction was provided to the 39th Signal Battalion from that staff office through the Army component Signal Officer at headquarters US Army Support Group, Vietnam. On August 2, 1962, the 39th was assigned to the US Army Support Group, Vietnam. This meant the commander of the 39th Signal Battalion assumed dual responsibilities as both the battalion commander and the US Army, Vietnam G6 signal staff officer.

In May 1962, the battalion was tasked with operating and maintaining the US advisors voice radio net. Concurrently to this activity the staff of the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CinC Pac) believed that the buildup in Vietnam required centralized management and control of long-distance communications in and out of the Republic of Vietnam. They recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that operation of the Army's strategic communications station in at Phu Lam be transferred from the control of MACV back to United States Army, Pacific. This required that the station continue to provide communications support to the advisers in Vietnam and an augmentation to the 39th Signal Battalion. As a result in September 1962 the station, consisting of 134 officers and men, was assigned to US Army Support Group, Vietnam and attached to the 39th Signal Battalion for operational control.

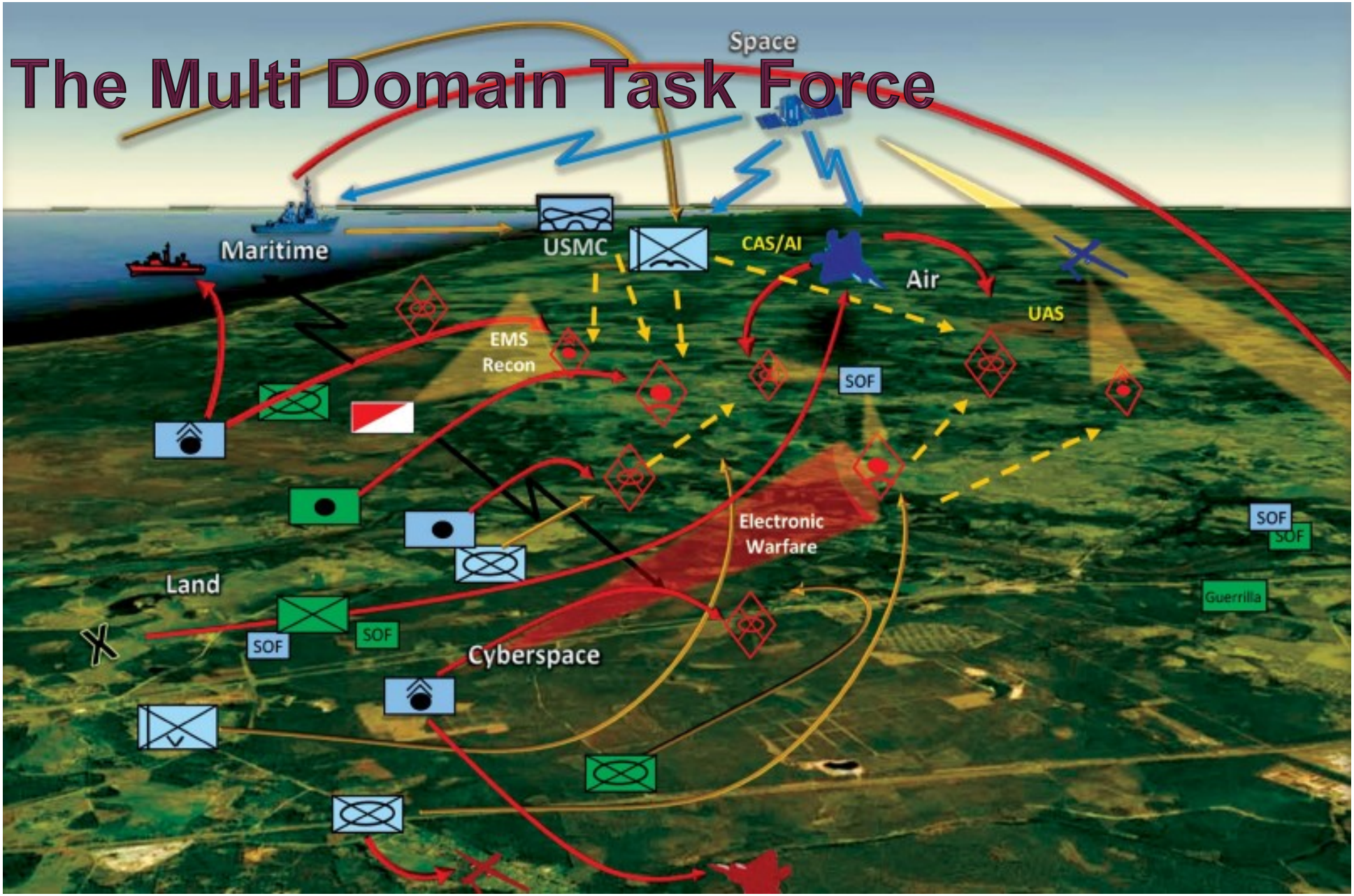
Later, in December 1962, the 39th assumed operational responsibil

Close-up of an AN/TRC-90 and AN/TRC-24 tropospheric scatter antennas at Ton Son Nhut airbase outside Saigon. Photo: Signal History Office Collection

ity for the countrywide US advisory Operations and Intelligence Radio Net down to elements located at the South Vietnamese division level. The battalion received an augmentation of over 200 soldier from the MACV to help operate this network. In order to supervise the battalion's widespread operations, now located at thirty-two sites throughout South Vietnam, a System Control was established. The 39th continued to be the only Signal battalion in the theater until 1965 when the 41st and 69th Signal Battalions arrived to support the buildup of US Army forces that year.

The 39th Signal Battalion would serve 11 years in Vietnam, earning all 17 campaign streamers of the war and would be among the last US troops to depart. The battalion had also earned five Meritorious Unit Commendations during its decade of service. On March 15, 1973, the 39th cased its colors and a three-person color detachment departed the country. After a short flight on a Pan Am aircraft, the color detachment arrived in Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany. On March 28, 1973, the colors were unfurled and the 39th Signal battalion assumed the mission of operating radio sites and relays in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Northern Germany.

Next Month...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